

The 60 Plus Association

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James L. Martin
President

Rep. Roger Zion (R-IN, 1967-75)
Honorary Chairman

Pat Boone
National Spokesman

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Dear FCC Commissioners:

While the 60 Plus Association stands firm for less government and fewer taxes, we haven't had an issue with the concept of charging phone customers in order to make phone service available and affordable to people living in high-cost areas, such as rural America. After all, one of the successes of the mid 20th century was expanding the nation's phone network to virtually every nook and cranny of this country. And stringing those phone lines through dense woods, across endless plains and through ragged mountains served the benefits of all, not just the relatively few people who received dial tone. The lines have been strung and Americans, rural and urban, have service.

Yet the universal service fund (*USF*) still exists. Moreover, there is a program that seemingly transforms those USF small surcharges into a boondoggle for a few companies, all without providing any real benefit to rural phone customers. That's where you can step up and put an end to this travesty of a good program.

I am writing you today on behalf of the 60 Plus Association to ask that you put a cap on the High Cost portion of the *USF Fund* that is going to Competitive Eligible Telecommunications Carriers. As you know, in 2006 this funding soared to almost \$1 billion. Because this portion of the USF has no cap, the costs keep going up without the needed oversight to ensure these funds are used solely to make an actual difference in providing needed service. Unfortunately, the way the fund is designed at the present time, it lacks this critical element of checks and balances.

Despite the promise of lower prices due to increase competition, senior citizens have seen the amount of our phone bills rise. Many seniors today join the ranks of teenagers by carrying cell phones everywhere we go. We have features we couldn't imagine in the old monopoly days. But that doesn't mean that we turn a blind eye to the added fees and taxes that make up every bill. Why continue charging seniors, who many are on a fixed income, unnecessary charges? None of us want to be unwitting parties to what appears to be a scam benefiting only a few companies, especially if consumers, including seniors, are the ones footing the bill.

When we do the math, it is obvious we cannot afford the steady increases in payments to CETCs that are benefiting from this fund. We urge you to do the only reasonable thing and put a cap on this portion of the USF, similar to that on other portions. Please either ensure that our fees are meeting legitimate needs, or return the money to our pocketbooks so we can use it to meet our own legitimate needs.

Sincerely,



James L. Martin

The 60 Plus Association is a 15-year-old nonpartisan organization taking on important issues such as death tax repeal, saving Social Security, working to lower energy costs, affordable prescription drugs and other senior-friendly issues featuring a less government, less taxes approach. 60 Plus calls on support from nearly 4.5 million citizen activists. 60 Plus publishes a quarterly magazine, SENIOR VOICE, and a Scorecard, bestowing a Guardian of Seniors' Rights award on lawmakers of both parties who vote "pro-senior." 60 Plus has been called "an increasingly influential senior citizen's group" and "the conservative alternative to the AARP." 60 Plus has established a membership benefit program. To join 60 Plus or for further information, please go to our website at www.60plus.org or call 888-560-PLUS (7587).